

Learn more about Active Living at Saturday fair

By Brock Weir

Staying active, keeping your brain sharp, eating healthily, and getting a good night sleep are all essentials for good living, but if you're ever at a loss on how to start getting back on track, head over to the Aurora Seniors' Centre this Saturday for the annual Seniors' Information & Active Living Fair.

This free event, hosted by the Town of Aurora, is designed for adults aged 55+, and provides an opportunity for people to gather information about health services and supports within the community.

Over 40 exhibitors will be on hand to answer just about every conceivable question about healthy, active living and ongoing on-stage demonstrations and a complimentary on-site barbeque hosted by Enbridge and Chartwell means there is something for everybody at the fair.

"This is my favourite event of the year ? it is one of the few events where you can get everyone in the room who is just interested in making older adult lives better," says Karie Papillon of the Aurora Seniors' Centre. "Every single person who is here wants to do something to help a senior in their community."

Normally held at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, this will be the first year the Seniors' Information & Active Living Fair will be held at the Seniors' Centre itself. It is a way to not only get senior volunteers on hand to help make the event happen ? and they answered the call in droves, says Ms. Papillon ? but it also affords them the opportunity to show off the Seniors' Centre facilities and everything that it has to offer.

"We try to change the exhibitors each year and we keep expanding exhibitors," she says. "In our first year we had 18 tables. Last year we had 35 and this year we have 45. We changed the demonstrations and healthy living seminars each year and always guarantee a very fun time at the fair as well. The vendor I am probably most excited to have new this year is the Central LHIN will be here. Between them and having Service Canada, the Ministry of Finance and CHATS, I really feel like any senior who has questions about health care, the government in general, their pension ? because of that combination they are really going to be able to get any of their questions answered this year, and I find that very exciting."

It can also be very rewarding. Last year, Ms. Papillon said a senior woman came into the fair and stopped at a table offering a blood pressure clinic. When she had her blood pressure taken, it was found to be high and they suggested she see her doctor. She went in the next week, undertook a series of tests, and was put on medication to get things under control.

"The part of that that is most interesting is she hadn't been feeling well in a while, so when she finally went to her doctor and got the feedback she needed, she is now a regular here at our fitness classes, is out of the house more, and actually feels like she's younger ? it's lovely."

The Fair will offer a wide variety of programs throughout the Seniors' Centre. In addition to getting a chance to see various Centre programs in action ? from tai chi, to Bocce, to their Keep Singing program ? there will be a number of seminars, including one from Dr. Lisa Sanchez of Return to Health Aurora on the importance of a good night's sleep.

Representatives from the Alzheimer Society of York Region will touch upon brain health, while Sobeys will be on hand to discuss and demonstrate how to get and prepare healthy food.

"We do this event to benefit the community, so we want to see the community embrace it and we're really excited about it," says Ms. Papillon. "I think sometimes we should change our name at the Seniors' Centre. When you walk into this building, it doesn't feel like a bunch of seniors sitting around and doing nothing. It is also rare that I talk to anyone here and think, 'Oh, senior.' These are just active, vital adults who want to stay that way and we can't wait to show the community that's what we are. If that's you, come down and join us because we'd love to have you here and just create social connections and making the centre a better place to be."

The Seniors' Information & Active Living Fair will take place at the Aurora Seniors' Centre (Municipal Drive off John West Way) this Saturday, June 16, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will over 40 exhibitors. For more information, visit www.aurora.ca/activeseniors, or call 905-727-3123 x3610.